



Strength and Honor

The Spiritual Warfare against Pornography

by Rev. Dr. Steven Hokana

Introduction

Thank you for picking up this booklet. It is my prayer it helps you stop and consider the challenge of pornography in your life. We will accomplish this by discussions about what God says about sex, pornography, and its impact on the individual. We will conclude with a final section giving you a plan of action.

There is no better place to discuss pornography, its impact on you, and those around you than with the Holy Scriptures. “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” (Philippians 4:8).

There is no better representative who carries the light of Christ to the dark corners of a world sickened by sin than the great apostle Paul. Initially, he was a person who had a singular purpose in life—wipe out Christianity by any means necessary. The book of Acts tells us he endorsed the death of the first Christian by persecution—Stephen. But Christ had a plan for this man bent on the destruction of Christianity: He made him His number-one spokesman. So Paul brought Christ to a world that was loved by God and yet terribly lost. Based on Paul’s travels to places like Philippi, Athens and, eventually, Rome itself, he was well aware of the ancient world’s sin sickness, especially its struggle with sex.

He knew about the religions of the world and how the creation was revered over the Creator. When Christians approach the topic of pornography, it is important we earnestly seek out God for His divine mercy and help. We are not to simply *stop* something; in this case, the viewing of graphic sexual material. Instead, we are emboldened to *do* something: we are to *dwell*, meaning that we are to dwell on that which is true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, of good repute, i.e. anything worthy of praise. So yeah, we are going to hit the topic of pornography right between the eyes. A big part of this means talking about the *dwell* of the Christian life. Here are some ground rules to consider before we move forward:

Ground Rules:

1. This booklet offers a Christ-centered, faith-based, Christian approach to the spiritual battle of pornography. As such it can complement treatment, but is not intended as a substitute for patient care.
2. If you are worried about a loved one dealing with pornography, do not use this pamphlet as a weapon *against* that person. I know you are angry and frustrated. Shaming them with this booklet may only deepen their disgrace and drive them further into pornography.
3. If you feel a prisoner to pornography, place your faith, trust, and hope in the One who “sets the prisoner free.” Jesus loves you. Even though you don’t feel too loveable, you are nonetheless redeemed by Christ and Him alone. His action—not ours—saves us from sin.
4. I am not going to drift into protracted discussions on sexual aberrations, perversions, or fetishes. The concern here is about pornography and what it’s doing to the heart and soul in relationship to God and others.
5. We will look at a plan of action for you to persevere over pornographic addiction.
6. If at any time you feel depressed, suicidal, or homicidal, please seek out help.

Why a Booklet on Pornography?

The arguments to take a backseat to pornography are prevalent but weak.

1. Pornography has been with us for thousands of years. You find evidence of erotic/pornographic art in every ancient civilization. So what's the big deal? The ancient Greeks, Romans, empires of China and India, and others all have graphic depictions of men and women engaged in sexual behavior. It's a cultural thing, right? So what if we can't help it? Let's just give in to biology. It is, after all, who we are. Well, not so fast. Jesus made it clear in His preaching: "But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28).
2. Pornography enhances marriage. You may not have heard this too often, but it's proclaimed in many places. The claim is that it allows couples to explore their sexual fantasies and enliven their passion for each other. Sounds great in theory, but it's abysmal in its failure.
3. Pornography is harmless. Here I want to leave the data and tactical analysis behind. As a former chaplain of a maximum security prison, I have served as pastor to men who have committed felonious offenses, horrific crimes of a sexual nature against women, teenagers, children, and infants. Many came from homes where there was terrible abuse and neglect. All of the inmates I knew serving time for a sexual crime had a strong, hunger and lust for pornography. You should see the sadness in their eyes as they spend, in some cases, decades in prison for their crimes. Some call doing time in prison a "period of redemption," but they know it will never make up for what they did to their victims. Some are still in denial and justify their behavior or blame their behavior on alcohol or drug addiction. All grieve. They cry and descend into a gloom of sadness that comes when freedom is taken away; you lose your good name, your salary, and your family. The second characteristic of sex offender inmates is that they felt they would never get caught, at least initially. After a while they admit that prison was the only way for them not to hurt or maim a victim. So please take away two points from my experience: First, pornography is absolutely destructive to the person and to those he or she loves. Second, you *will* get caught. You will be exposed, and you will lose it all. When you get out of prison, your family wants nothing to do with you. You can't go to a wedding; you are not invited to family reunions, Christmas get-togethers, Thanksgivings, etc. You are done. This does not mean, of course, that Christ is *done* with you. As a believer, you still have the full rights of the kingdom of God as a member of the body of Christ. Life among your fellow human beings, however, can be a difficult and unforgiving journey.

Pornography as Art?

I'm sure you've heard words similar to these: "Hey, pornography is art!" Well, you might call it "art" if you consider art corrosive, oppressive, violent, destructive, a violation of boundaries, and a doorway to serious criminal behavior. Then again, perhaps it's pornography's art-like qualities linking it to drug addiction, spouse abuse, depression, isolation, and loneliness that make it something aesthetically beautiful. Pornography might even be considered an acceptable art form positioned somewhere over and above the moral teachings of the Ten Commandments, the wonder of human life as displayed in God's creation, and the redemptive work of Christ—with some loose creative thinking, that is. The fact is pornography is about hurtfulness to the user and others. It robs of innocence and is a horrendous taskmaster. It's brutal and it personifies sin in its rawest, most ugly form.

No, pornography is *not* art. Rather, it exploits all those involved with the industry—from those in its production, to those who consume it, to those connected to friends and loved ones addicted to it. It makes those in front of the camera descend into a world where boundaries disappear. Most of us have healthy boundaries, and we know when someone is violating those—whether it's by way of a callous comment, inappropriate touching, or a general feeling of receiving bad vibes from someone. God creates boundaries. This is part of His plan for us. As it is recorded in the book of Psalms, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (see Psalm 139). God's plan for us as being created in His image comes with boundaries. They establish order in a chaotic world and lead to happiness. One such boundary is marriage. Couples voluntarily give of themselves to each other. It is healthy and appropriate that intimacy, sexual joy, and satisfaction are part of the boundary. There are, of course, all sorts of boundaries aside from marriage: between parent and child, among colleagues at work, between students and teachers in school, and between coaches and athletes on and off the field. Look how destructive the situation becomes when a boundary violation takes place. It destroys the very fabric of our being, causing upheaval in our churches, schools, and families. Reading and hearing about boundary violation alone can make us feel threatened.

Naturally, we react to boundary threats. God is deeply concerned that we keep boundaries. His Holy Word is filled with boundaries such as the clear prohibitions found in Leviticus 25:18 and Deuteronomy 32:8. In another instance, the apostle

Paul refers to the boundary crossed when one marries an unbeliever: “Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?” (2 Corinthians 6:14). Elsewhere, he writes of associating with prostitutes: “Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, ‘The two will become one flesh’” (1 Corinthians 6:16a).

Pornography destroys boundaries. Pornography is a doorway to addiction that, when left unchecked, leads to appalling and demented behavior. If you think this does not apply to you, most sex offenders in prison would disagree. They know, whether they admit it or not, that pornography is a corrosive force that inflicts misery upon the soul and is a destroyer of our most intimate relationships. This battle is about warfare, a *spiritual* battle. Pornography strikes at the heart of our fallen humanity, our base sinful natures.

Is Pornography Addictive?

According to *Webster’s Dictionary*, an addiction is a persistent, compulsive dependence on a behavior or substance. Addiction has been extended, however, to include mood-altering behaviors or activities. Some researchers speak of two types of addictions: substance addictions (i.e. alcoholism, narcotics and smoking); and process addictions (i.e. gambling, spending, shopping, eating and sexual activity). In a book of prayers there was a special petition for those dealing with addiction. It has the phrase, “Lord we pray for those who have lost their freedom.” How appropriate this is. There are technical and slang terms for addiction. We understand that chemical changes occur in the brain, causing a release of both pleasure and euphoria.

For those hooked on video gaming or texting, you see what occurs. This is not to be trivialized. If you’re ever in a power outage in a large metropolitan area, watch the withdrawal symptoms that occur when people cannot get on their computers. This sudden interruption leads to feelings of anxiety and depression.

On another level, pornography, like gambling, causes a change in brain chemistry. Once you’ve tasted the potent and toxic rush, it’s hard to walk away.

There is also a more insidious aspect to pornographic addiction, which drives users to feel they *must* have more. Like other addicts needing their next hit, shot, or snort, those held captive by pornography need their next look, their next visual impression; otherwise, they too can slip into despair, where feelings of depression and helplessness overwhelm. If left unchecked, one can descend into the abyss of sin very quickly. This is extremely dangerous. Pornographic addiction and a saturation of its images can lead to violent sexual expression and pedophilia—both of which are criminal and deviant.

If you’re a person addicted to pornography it’s no longer good enough to view photos and heterosexual activity. Soon the appetite, fueled by our sinful nature, takes over and sexual wanderlust kicks in. Many inmates in prison blame their crimes on their pornographic addiction. If left unchecked, the frequent use of pornography distorts perceptions and impacts relationships. Sexual activity is no longer intended for mutual joy and as an expression of love. An addiction, from the perspective of a Christian, is best defined as a substitute for one’s total reliance on God and the love of His Son, Christ Jesus.

Coming to Terms with You

Let’s talk about you. First, how does God see you? God has always intended us to express ourselves through our identities, male or female, as a key part of who we are. You express yourself and your relationship with God and with one another as a man or woman, all being created in the image of God. He knows this. Often in the Bible God uses the relationship between a husband and a wife as a picture of the relationship we have with Him. It is beautiful and intimate. The language of sexuality to express this intimacy is bound and immersed in His love. When time permits, read about this intimacy in the Old Testament book, the Song of Solomon. When you look at the book of Hosea you also see how God views infidelity, as He makes His prophet marry a prostitute, who then bears him children. This book is very moving and tragic but concludes with a strong and positive message. We know from the Bible the Lord created our sexuality and intercourse. God intended sexual expression as one of the joys of a married, committed relationship. Without a doubt, sex is awesome—a genuine treasure to be shared between a man and a woman in marriage.

Now look at pornography. Pornography is tyrannical. It impacts our faith, attitudes, and principles as well as influences professional relationships on the job and in our families. It brings one into a never-ending downward spiral. In many ways pornography has the same effect as betting has for a compulsive gambler—it continually tightens the noose through each act.

Sex as God Sees It

“So God created mankind in His own image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them. God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it” (see Genesis 1:27-28a).

God has always intended your sexuality, male or female, to be a key part of your human identity. As a child of God you express your relationship with God and one another as a man or woman. He knows this and talks to us in the language of sexuality to express the intimacy of His love. Per the book of Genesis, we know the Lord has designed us as sexual beings. The words of Scripture call to mind a tender couple, knowing each other and beginning a family together. “Adam made love to his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, ‘With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man’” (Genesis 4:1-2).

The LORD God intends intercourse to be a unique form of union, reminding each individual of their total commitment to the marriage as well as their obligation to honor the other with their body exclusively. Amazing! God’s intention for a man or woman’s sexual expression is to bring pleasure to their partner—all the while uniting them more fully through the sexual love they share.

The Pornification of America

So what’s the problem? There is nothing more pervasive today than sex and sexuality. Sex has been used to sell everything from liverwurst to Lamborghinis. If it’s that pervasive—and *it works*—can this frequent use of sex be wrong? Well, this perhaps speaks to the way constant images and innuendoes of sex have weakened our resistance, making us want more of the same—no matter how uncreative and similar these images are. Pornography and its corrosiveness destroy souls, topple marriages, and tear down our relationships between one another and, more importantly, between us and God.

The easy-blowing winds of society push its citizens toward the dangerous rocks of marital trouble and moral decay. The lure of sex is everywhere. You see it in advertisements all around—on TV, the radio, in print, on the internet. Primetime television regularly offers pornographic-styled scenes to keep an audience engaged. One telling example of using sex to sell a product is an advertisement about a new telephone. In the spot a husband gets into a car, as his wife and kids say goodbye. The daughters tell the father they made a video for him. The device downloads the clip to be viewed later. After the kids leave, the wife approaches the husband in the car and says she made a special video for him, but it’s not to be viewed in public. The husband’s eyes light up, and the commercial ends. But what just happened? In the blink of an eye the viewer observes a technique for sending a video. But it’s not just any video. In this case, the wife is characterized as having made a sexually oriented video clip to keep her husband happy while away. But how typical is this of our society—our short-term memory. And what of the possible downline effects? What if the cell phone is lost or stolen? What if the video is then put online and viewed by millions? What about the sacredness, intimacy, and privacy of marriage?

All of this may seem an uphill battle. It certainly illustrates how we are living in an age where the sexualization of society—i.e. the overt maneuvers media and culture use to cloak everything in terms and images of sex—has become an ordinary and unquestioned part of our lives. As such it must be resisted. We may not be able to buck the tide of culture, but we can certainly succeed at deleting pornography from our own lives.

Defeating Pornographic Addiction

When going to war, one has to know the enemy and his strengths. In this conflict, we rest solely on God’s grace through His Son, Jesus. “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:8-10). Through faith in Christ’s work on the cross on your behalf, you are saved by God’s grace with a mission and purpose to your life. In other words, you aren’t finished yet.

The kingdom of God has a purpose for you. In respect to this purpose, please consider the following items:

1. **Ask** yourself, “Do I have a problem? Am I addicted to pornography?” There are numerous assessment tools to determine addiction. Perhaps the easiest is to go without pornography for 14 days. If you’re addicted you’ll feel withdrawal symptoms soon into the two-week period. But stay with it. It takes the brain some time to live without the “fix” pornography feeds.

2. **Ask yourself**, “What is going on with me when I’m engaged in pornography?” You may find it’s not about the sex primarily. It may be fatigue, anger, inadequacy, boredom. It’s about filling a void. Realize it, call it what it is, and decide it’s time to move beyond pornography.
3. **Go cold turkey!** DO NOT attempt a gradual withdrawal. Here are a couple of ideas to help you steer clear of porn. Avoid all areas where you are tempted to dive into it. Take a different route home; vigilantly watch your free time; turn off the computer or, at least, don’t access it when alone. It does no good to shake an addiction only to keep the door open for it to begin all over again.
4. **Find a confidant** you trust for conversation and moral support. Overcoming porn isn’t an easy victory. There are others who can help you get on track, and stay there.
5. **Warning about spouse!** Your pornographic addiction has already pushed them out of the center of your life. Thus, think very hard about making your spouse your confidant. Telling them about your addiction may be interpreted in a number of negative ways. First, it will hurt them. Your confession is an indictment that they are not good enough. Your admission tells your beloved he or she is a second-class citizen in your heart. In addition, it’s likely your soul mate cannot compete with the graphic images of porn. They probably don’t have easy access to extensive plastic surgery, a repertoire of gymnastic skills, in-home personal fitness trainers, or time to spend hours in a gym honing their bodies. If you are a married man, your wife cannot compete in your world of tailor-made fantasy. Your spouse may consider your pornographic addiction equal to unfaithfulness. This can lead to physical altercation, legal consequences, and divorce. Seek out a specialist on this issue, and let your spouse be a spouse.
6. **The power of forgiveness** is a great weapon against defeating any addiction, including pornography. The formula of CCAA is always effective: Contrition, Confession, Absolution, and Amendment.
 - a. **Contrition.** You can’t move from a place of darkness without feeling legitimately and honestly sorry for what you are doing—or have done. The feeling of overwhelming guilt is a positive step in the *right* direction.
 - b. **Confession.** Keeping the pain locked in your heart is not going to make it go away. Instead, talk to a trusted confessor about your addiction to pornography. You can pray fervently and out loud about the struggle you are going through. You can write a prayer to God about the sin of pornographic addiction, destroying the paper your prayer was written on afterwards. But it must get out in the open where you can see and feel the admission of your broken heart.
 - c. **Absolution.** There comes a point where you give it up to God. In response to you giving Him the sin of pornographic addiction, He, in turn, cleanses and forgives you. (What a God we serve!) This is a leap of faith for you. Believe Him that He forgives as He promises in His Word.
 - d. **Amendment.** At this point you are truly ready to move on. You do so by changing your behavior and, as a result, your life. You intentionally do all you can to let the addiction die, suffocating its lure and its pull on your mind. There are other amendments you can do, too: pray for others lost to addiction; make a donation to the faith-based group that helped you in your fight; intentionally set aside 15 minutes a day for Bible reading and focused meditation; encourage others in the struggle. You can probably add a few of your own.
7. **The power of God’s grace** is not to be minimized. In fact, it is what has saved you. There are some groups that make pacts with each other, concerning members’ addictions. Generally, they promise they would rather die than fall back into sin. While this may sound good, it’s dangerous when dealing with addiction. You are fighting flesh and spirit. This is not simply a matter of personal integrity, strength of will, or a test of one’s character. This is about a treacherous addiction. God understands the human condition and our need for grace. It is only through His undeserved love as demonstrated by Jesus’ death and resurrection that we are truly set free. Moreover, we are given a new identity. Whole, clean, emboldened, and strengthened, we move forward by God’s grace—His free and life-changing grace.

As you successfully combat pornography, I want to leave you with a clearer understanding of you and your struggle with pornography.

An Effective Tool of the Enemy—Isolation

As Roman legions prepared to engage the enemy, they understood a key element to obtaining victory. Prior to the first salvo of arrows, the first blast of the bugle, or the first crack of a catapult, they would turn to one another, look each other in the eye, and say, “Fortidio et honor” (“strength and honor”). How apt when going into battle! There is no better way to

approach the topic of spiritual warfare against pornography then to look each other in the eye and say to one another, “Strength and honor!” As you wage spiritual warfare against pornography, I pray you gain a newfound understanding of what it means to be a man of faith, a man who expresses himself through healthy sexuality. It’s no stretch to say that men in the early 21st century are floundering; many have lost their way completely. The image of a loving, God-fearing man is blurred by societal influences that are manipulative at best and criminal at worst. Cultural forces frequently define hip men as liquor-drinking, smooth-talking, skirt-chasing, debonair, party animals, whose sole preoccupation is to find the next good time. Now, we could all sit around and lament this state of affairs, blaming those responsible. But when the day is done, we’re no further along. Instead, I say, *take charge!* Take responsibility! Make a difference when and where you are in the battle against the flesh.

In 2 Corinthians 10, the apostle Paul rouses his reader to take up arms sufficient to meet—and *beat*—the enemy. “For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of our world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds” (2 Corinthians 10:3-4). Thank God for God! It is in Him we find our identity. It is in His Word we find our true character as men. The Bible speaks, and we feel God’s righteous breath!

For centuries nations have fielded armies to stand against threats of annihilation from invading armies. We need to do the same. Pornography is an invasion. It infiltrates our culture, our homes, and our minds. We need to treat this cancer like an invading army, and we must get deadly serious about it. Greek hoplites, French legionaries, American infantrymen, and all those lined up shoulder to shoulder to stop an enemy knew their own lives weren’t as important as those they stood ready to protect: their wives, girlfriends, parents, children, and the future of their people. Consider too the enemy and where it met destruction. For the Greeks it was Thermopylae against the Persians. For King David it was a lonely valley filled with Philistines. For the French in World War I, the place was Verdun against the German Empire. In modern history the date was September 11, the place, New York City. As the towers came down, the resolve of a nation stood firm. The spiritual enemy we face is filthy and cunning. He knows who we are, understands our fallen nature, and skillfully uses it against us.

For the individual going toe to toe with porn, there is no better tool than the “*Spiritus Gladius*,” the “sword of the Spirit,” as found in Ephesians 6:10-20. Please note the weapons of war in these verses are not for doing battle against the flesh; they are weapons designed to destroy Satan himself. Pornography plays on our God-given wiring and sends it out of control. The devil knows our sexuality and how our desire for intimacy is easily highjacked, especially when struggling with self-worth, addiction, troubled relationships, finances, and more.

So, in this booklet we stand shoulder to shoulder as we face the enemy—a master liar adept at fraud and psychological warfare. Satan wants you to see his unholy array, bearing banners unfurled to frighten you to your core. There are untold thousands upon thousands of them, and they want to kill you, strip you naked, and take not only your life, but everything that has any meaning for you.

This is spiritual warfare. Stop now! Turn off the computer. Get off those websites. Stop visiting stores that deal in pornography. Stay away from chat rooms that lure and tease you into the squalid cesspool of pornography. Satan is contesting over you like he did the body of Moses, and his tools are bent on your destruction, to rip you away from the kingdom of God. Don’t go the way of those ancients who knew better, but scorned God’s Word anyway. “In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire” (Jude 1:7).

Defeating pornography in our lives is spiritual combat, a battle where we need the Lord Christ leading from the front, protecting our flank, and keeping the enemy from slamming our vulnerable areas. When facing down an enemy, it’s important to know your own strength as well as the weapons in your arsenal. When you look at the enemy, don’t stare; instead, be disinterested. Victorious armies don’t win the day simply because they have superior arrows, spears, rifles, or artillery; they win because they are trained, confident and disciplined. Armies that destroy their enemies know how to use their weapons effectively; they possess the utmost discipline. So it should be with each of us as warriors of the cross. Trust in your Commander, your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. His is the banner we rally around. Let Him fight and win this victory for you! It is in His Name we conquer strongholds, including those built around the deception and slavery of pornography.

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